From the Ground Up: Assessing and Building the Data Capacity of Community-Based Agencies in the Mission Promise Neighborhood Collaborative

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Overview, Background, Objectives
The Mission Promise Neighborhood
San Francisco’s Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN) is a cross-agency initiative, funded by the Department of Education, that aims to improve the lives of children, youth, and families of San Francisco’s Mission District.

Data Capacity of MPN
The Department of Education requires that MPN collect and track data from its funded programs and partners. This poses a challenge to agencies that do not have sufficient data infrastructure in place. To respond to this challenge, the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) embarked on a data capacity assessment, which included:

- A data discovery of 24 MPN partner agencies
- A technical assistance plan to support their collection of required MPN data points
- Ongoing technical assistance for developing data collection system for continuous improvement

Objectives of Data Capacity Assessment

- Understand what data partner agencies collect about their programs
- Prepare partners to meet MPN data mandates
- Strengthen partners’ ability to achieve measurable results, and use data for continuous improvement

Data Capacity Assessment Process
Over a seven-month period, we conducted two data site visits with each of our 24 partner agencies to better understand their data strengths, challenges, and needs. Information collected during these visits helped us assess areas of improvement around data collection and infrastructure, and develop technical assistance plans to support partners in building their capacity to collect, track, and report information for MPN.

Partner Level of Service and Data Collection
Partner agencies collect varying types of program and participant data, depending on the agency’s level of service. Our data capacity assessments lead us to discover that partners serving children, youth, or parents collect more demographic and case management data about their participants, while partners serving educators collect less data about their participants.

Technical Assistance Plan
An agency’s ability to effectively communicate regarding their work—and the impact that work is having on the population served, explained via numbers (data)—is extremely important. Being able to utilize data to underscore the value of a program, in the form of results to diverse stakeholders and funders, can influence an agency’s ability to continue delivering programs and services. For agencies to be advocates for their programs and services, they need data. Collecting the right set of data is a task that requires resources and know-how; this defines data capacity.

Build a system for continuous improvement

Foster a results-driven culture

Consistent communication is key
- Data collection requires that internal team members and partner agency staff be on the same page
- Frequent communication is necessary so that all parties are clear on data reporting requirements

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